

Kyrie

from *Mass for Four Voices*

William Byrd
edited by The King's Singers

Soprano Ky - rie e - lei - son, Ky - rie e - lei - -

Alto Ky - rie e - lei - - - - - son, Ky -

Tenor Ky - rie e - lei - - - - -

Bass Ky - rie e -

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S. - - son, Ky - rie e - lei - - - son.

A. rie e - lei - son, Ky - ri - e e - lei - - son.

T. - son, Ky - rie e - lei - - - - - son.

B. lei - son, Ky - rie e - lei - - - - son.

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S. Chri - ste e - lei - son, Chri - ste e - lei - son,

A. Chri - ste e - lei - son, Chri - ste_

T. Chri - ste e - lei - son, Chri - ste_ e - lei - son

B. Chri - ste e - lei - son, Chri - ste_

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S. Chri - ste e - lei - son, Chri - ste e - lei - son.

A. _ e - lei - son, Chri - ste_ e - lei - son.

T. Chri - ste_ e - lei - son, Chri - ste e - lei - son.

B. _ e - lei - son, Chri - ste e - lei - son.

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S. Ky - rie e - lei - - son.

A. - son, Ky - rie e - lei - - - - - son.

T. Ky - rie e - lei - - - - - son.

B. lei - son, Ky - rie e - lei - - - - - son.

Renaissance Europe makes today's landscape positively dull! Let's briefly travel back in time to the 16th century in England. This was a time of massive religious upheaval, as the previously Catholic country was reformed into a Protestant one. As part of the wave of religious reformation that swept across Europe, Henry VIII created the Church of England in 1534. He solidly turned his back on the ornate styles of Rome and the Vatican, whose motets were gorgeous and complex and polyphonic and in Latin.

The Church of England enforced much more simple services; preaching and music had to be in English only, and the musical content had to be clear, homophonic, and accessible. Well, as with any large-scale enforced change, there were of course rebels. In this case the Rebel Alliance just happened to include one of England's finest ever composers - William Byrd. Whilst writing bespoke Protestant ditties for Henry's daughter, Queen Elizabeth the 1st, he secretly kept on composing Catholic music for all the clandestine masses being held underground - sometimes literally underground.

When writing these motets, Byrd would pick texts from the Bible which could be interpreted as thinly veiled references to the dire state of the Catholic Church at the time. One of the best examples of this is *Ne Irascaris Domine*, which finishes with the words "*Zion is a desolation, Jerusalem has been laid to waste*".

Despite the fact that people were arrested for simply owning copies of Byrd's music, *his* works, and those of other covert composers, helped keep this brutally marginalised Catholic community to feel connected during this lonely and dark time for religion in Europe.

Mass for Four Voices was written around 1592-3 and exists as one of three settings of the Mass Ordinary, along with a 3-part and a 5-part setting. Common performance practice is to pronounce *Kyrie* in this setting as a two syllable word.